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ICELANDIC AUTHORS OF TODAY, by Halldór Hermannsson. (*Islandica*, Vol. VI), Ithaca, N. Y., 1913; xiv, 69 pp.

In the form of a "Who's Who" short biographical sketches of over a hundred and fifty Icelandic writers are given here with very full lists of their productions. These comprise articles, stories and other contributions to periodicals as well as matter which came out in book-form. Only *living* writers "of some consequence" could be included, or the volume would have been twice as large. The term "author" is used in the widest sense and includes not only the poet, the novelist and the playwright, but the philologist, historian, theologian, jurist, and physician; the educator, journalist, musician, engineer, agriculturalist, and all. About ten per cent of the authors are women. Icelandic writers living in Denmark (Copenhagen), Canada and the United States are, of course, also considered. The work contains in a preface a brief sketch of the literary activity of the island from the beginning to the present and, as an appendix, a "List of Books and Essays Relating to Modern Icelandic Literature (since ca. 1550)."

In looking over these pages one is struck by the variety of the interests of many Icelandic writers (the late Steingrímur Thorsteinsson was a poet, a philologist, a translator, an educator, member of the Bible Translation Committee, president of the Reykjavík Forestry Soc., etc.), and by the productiveness of scholars like Thorvaldur Thoroddsen, the geologist and geographer, and Finnur Jónsson, the lists of whose publications cover respectively two and three large pages of fine print. One notices without surprise the great proportion (over a third) of the authors represented here who have also tried their hand at translating from foreign languages. The increasing production in the fields of the drama, short story and novel, that has been perceptible in modern Icelandic literature, becomes very evident from a study of this volume.

We are glad to be assured (Preface, p. xi) that "Never in modern times has Icelandic literature been more flourishing than at present. Never before, since the settlement of the country, has such an earnest effort been made by this small nation to assert its independence both intellectually and politically. Considering the size of the population, the literary output is very large; and in quality as well as variety it is worthy of all respect." The population of Iceland has grown from 70,000 to 90,000 in the last twenty-five years; this in spite of the fact that the emigrants to "Vesturheimur" (America) since 1870 with their descendants amount to 20 or 25 per cent of all people of Icelandic blood. But it is a people "who should be weighed rather than counted," as some one has said. Since the seat of government was transferred to Reykjavík from Copenhagen twelve years ago there has been a great change in the national spirit. Much has been done for education and the general welfare of the people (establishment of a university in 1911, etc.). If there is not an increasing production of literature of merit in Icelandic, it will not be from lack of encouragement at home. Greater interest and appreciation abroad will not fail to come.

Mr. Hermannsson's statements as to the necessary limitations of his work disarm criticism. It is to be hoped that sometime it may be possible to publish an enlarged edition, including *all* Icelandic authors of the modern period, in which the place of publication (if not Reykjavík) and the number of pages of

books will be stated and the titles of Icelandic articles in periodicals will be given in that language also (not in English only, as now). One looks in vain for Mr. Hermannsson's own name among the authors—it surely deserves a place there. In its present form the volume is most welcome—it is indispensable to anyone interested in modern Iceland.

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ESAIAS TEGNÉR'S FRITIOFS SAGA, edited with introduction, bibliography, notes, and vocabulary by Andrew A. Stomberg. Rock Island, Ill., 1914. Augustana Book Concern. Pp. 197.

Of all Swedish texts that could be edited for use in American schools none is more important than *Fritiofs saga*. Whatever else is or is not edited, this must not be omitted, and it deserves and requires an edition of the highest quality attainable. *Fritiofs saga* was in this country first edited with a critical introduction, bibliography, and notes by George T. Flom (1909).¹ Largely owing to the lack of a vocabulary and the use of an old orthography, and owing to the fact that it was prepared primarily to fill the needs of the college and graduate student, Flom's edition was not adapted to the needs of the larger field of instruction when, during the year following its appearance, the subject of Swedish began to be introduced into American high schools. Stomberg's edition is thus the first one that attempts to meet the needs of the present day.

In the preface Stomberg says: ". . . the different English translations alone number approximately twenty. In German the number is almost as high." Flom, however, gives a list of twenty-five complete translations into German (Introd. pp. XVI-XIX).

While the introduction is fairly adequate, I am of the opinion that a work of the importance of *Fritiofs saga* should be accorded a more elaborate treatment. I would also suggest including a brief connected account of Scandinavian mythology (cf. the editor's preface) covering, if necessary, twenty-five pages; in the notes the editor could then refer to page and line number of the chapter on mythology. A general knowledge of the mythology should, if possible, precede the reading of the poem.

The text used is apparently that of Lindvall's school edition, with its inconsistent attempts at modernization along certain lines; e. g., *himlen* has usually (?), but not always, been changed to *himmeln*; *den andre*, to *den andra*, etc.

We shall now turn to the notes. In the preface the editor says: "*Fritiofs Saga* abounds in mythological names and terms, as well as in idiomatic expressions, and the preparation of the explanatory notes has therefore been a perplexing task." How are these difficulties solved? The next paragraph of the preface begins: "It has not been thought necessary or desirable to translate many idiomatic expressions in the text, as the vocabulary ought to enable the student, without the assistance of a lavish supply of notes, to get at the meaning." Attention is then called to the stimulating effect on the student of wrestling with the difficult sentences. At the head of the notes we find the

¹ Published by the Engberg-Holmberg Co., Chicago.